

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SOE-02 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 DOE-15 H-02 INR-10 INT-05
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 USIA-15 OES-07
SP-02 SS-15 STR-07 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 NRC-07 /140 W
-----107800 240805Z /17

R 231200Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL PALERMO
TO AMEMBASSY ROME
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL TRIESTE
AMCONSUL TURIN
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2427

UNCLAS PALERMO 0329

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: ENRG, ECON, SENV, IT
SUBJECT: CANDU NUCLEAR POWER PLANT FOR SICILY

REF: ROME 3814

1. THE RECENT APPROVAL BY THE ITALIAN MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING (CIPE) OF A 600 MW CANDU-TYPE NUCLEAR POWER STATION PROJECT FOR SICILY HAS, AS EXPECTED, AROUSED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PROTEST FROM SCIENTIFIC, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FIGURES ON THE ISLAND.

2. THIS REACTION WAS FORESHADOWED BY THE DISMAY OCCASIONED IN NOVEMBER BY PRESS REPORTS ARISING FROM PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI'S VISIT TO CANADA THAT SICILY AND SARDINIA HAD BEEN CHOSEN AS POSSIBLE LOCATIONS FOR TWO CANDU PLANTS.

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3. ARGUMENTS NOW BEING MADE AGAINST DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR POWER IN SICILY REFLECT POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OVER THE NUCLEAR POWER ISSUE GENERALLY, AS WELL AS OFFENDED REGIONAL SENSIBILITIES AND SUBSTANTIVE ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

4. SOME SICILIAN POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE COMPLAINED THAT IN

CHOOSING SICILY AS THE LOCATION OF A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT NEVER BOTHERED TO CONSULT WITH THE SICILIAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT. A NUMBER OF PRESS ARTICLES HAVE APPEARED WHICH SUGGEST THAT SOME REGIONAL AUTHORITIES ARE PREPARED TO FORCE A CONFLICT OF COMPETENCE BETWEEN THE ITALIAN STATE AND THE SICILIAN REGION, BASED ON THE POWERS GIVEN THE REGION IN THE SICILIAN CONSTITUTION REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INDUSTRIAL PLANTS. WHILE IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THIS WOULD BLOCK PLANT CONSTRUCTION, IT MIGHT CAUSE CONSIDERABLE DELAY.

5. OPPONENTS ALSO POINT OUT THE POLLUTION AND SECURITY RISKS INVOLVED, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE ISLAND'S NEW ECONOMY PRIORITIES,

WHICH FAVOR THE GROWTH OF AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM. ANOTHER STATED OBJECTION IS THE AVAILABILITY OF "CLEAN" AND UNLIMITED ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF ENERGY SUCH AS SOLAR, GEOTHERMAL AND WIND. SICILY HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY SOLAR-ENERGY MINDED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, AND HAS DEVELOPED ITS OWN GROUP OF SOLAR ENERGY CADRE. IN FACT, THE SICILIAN GOVERNMENT LAST YEAR WAS THE FIRST REGION TO APPROVE A LAW FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOLAR ENERGY RESEARCH AND RELATED ACTIVITIES.

6. FINALLY, SOME ECONOMIC EXPERTS HAVE OBSERVED THAT SICILY'S PRESENT AND FUTURE ELECTRIC POWER REQUIREMENTS ARE MORE THAN ADEQUATELY COVERED BY CURRENT PLANNING WHICH PROJECTS THE EXPANSION OF EXISTING TRADITIONAL POWER STATIONS AND THE CONSTRUCTION UNCLASSIFIED

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OF ADDITIONAL THERMAL AND HYDROELECTRIC PLANTS.

7. WE THINK THAT ABOVE MAY BE OF INTEREST TO POSTS WHICH HAVE SOLICITED PARTICIPATION IN THE PALERMO CONFERENCE ON ENERGY, ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT BEGINNING ON MARCH 28 (REFTEL), SINCE THESE ISSUES WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ARISE. BARRY

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